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ABSTRACT

Community-based programs in the juvenile justice system present a promising alternative to the disappointing results achieved by large institutional facilities. A diverse group of states has found that intensive, individualized services provided in small, family-like residential settings or in the juvenile's own home yield comparable or reduced recidivism rates. The success of these programs appears to depend on how well they are managed, their diversity, and their intensity, all of which may be affected by state funding decisions. Community-based programs may also reduce costs. In-home placement with intensive supervision and community-based services are especially appropriate for the large numbers of nonviolent juveniles and those guilty of lesser offenses who often have been placed in traditional institutions. The tendency to widen the net of intervention may erode some of the cost-savings. States can use objective criteria to determine juvenile placements to ensure consistency and maximize efficiency. Although most states leave placement decisions to the courts, some states vest the youth corrections agency with this authority. Special advisory groups or community and school representatives sometimes participate by making recommendations to the courts. As state legislators face a new wave of youth in their high-risk years for juvenile crime and steadily increasing juvenile justice system costs, increased reliance on community-based programs may be an important new tool to maximize rehabilitation, minimize costs, and maintain public safety. (ABL)

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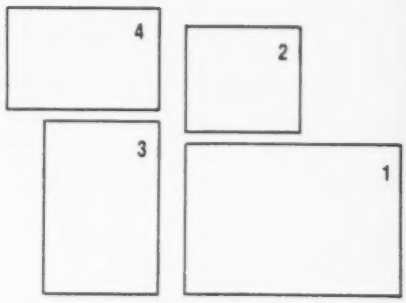

PHOTO REFERENCES

1. Art therapy class. Photo courtesy of Massachusetts Department of Youth Services.
2. Classroom at group home. Photo courtesy of Massachusetts Department of Youth Services.
3. Youths aboard the Ernestina, part of a three week transitional program. Photo courtesy of Massachusetts Department of Youth Services.
4. Classroom at secure treatment facility. Photo courtesy of Massachusetts Department of Youth Services.

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INTRODUCTION

Since early in the 19th century, a special government role in the treatment of youths in the juvenile justice system has been recognized. The philosophy of *parens patriae*, or common guardian of the community, gave states great latitude in treating juveniles while severely limiting their legal rights.

State government responded to this special responsibility by establishing training or industrial schools, large institutions designed to rehabilitate their charges through moral training, discipline, education, and job skills.

But throughout their lengthy history, industrial schools have been the setting for scandals concerning the treatment of their residents. Overcrowding, mixing of violent and nonviolent youth, brutality, the use of isolation cells, and inmate violence have fueled calls for reform and frequent litigation.

Most important, industrial schools have failed to rehabilitate their charges. Increased criminality by those released has led to doubts about these institutions' usefulness and fears that they are now part of the problem.

States as diverse demographically and politically as Massachusetts and Utah have pioneered the deinstitutionalization of adjudicated youths and closure of state training schools in favor of small, intensive, secure facilities for fewer serious offenders and community-based services for those who do not pose a risk to the public. Although some of these programs are too new to evaluate definitively, early assessments indicate that the movement away from the use of training schools can reduce per juvenile costs and criminal activity without increasing the threat to the public.

These new alternatives separate the few violent and serious repeat offenders from status offenders (those offenses, such as running away from home and truancy, would not be considered crimes if committed by adults) and lesser offenders. The most serious offenders, estimated at less than 20 percent of youth in the juvenile justice system, are sent to small, secure facilities, usually for longer lengths of stay than in traditional training school programs. Other offenders are placed in residential programs or remain in their homes while under state supervision. All receive services—often from private, nonprofit agencies—based on evaluations of individual need.

This paper looks at the challenges facing states in juvenile justice, the alternatives to large institutions that states can use, experiences in several states that have embraced deinstitutionalization, and formal evaluations of the effectiveness of reform.

THE PROBLEM FACING STATES

A series of issues confront legislators as they examine their juvenile justice systems. Many of these issues may intensify in the coming decade with a larger population of youth being in the high-risk years for juvenile crime. The expected, demographically driven increase in the number of crimes committed by juveniles may be exacerbated by already changing social characteristics. Today, 25 percent of all kids live in poverty, school dropout and teen pregnancy rates are increasing, there are more single parents, and a changing economy makes it more difficult for those without skills to compete for jobs. [7, p. 16]

Between 1977 and 1986, juvenile arrests dropped 12 percent, and the number of juveniles held for violent crimes decreased 11 percent between 1983 and 1987. These reductions, however, reflect a smaller teen population. Yet, the number held for drug and alcohol offenses increased more than 50 percent between 1985 and 1987. Despite the overall decrease in arrests for juvenile crime over the past decade, the number of juveniles in custody has grown to its highest level since 1971. In 1987, the average daily census of juveniles held in state and local custody was 55,503 juveniles in 1,107 public facilities. (See Table 1.) Longer lengths of stay have contributed to this increase. [11, p. B2]

Costs have increased, too. State and local governments spent $1.46 billion on juvenile facilities in 1986, an average of $27,000 per resident, up 32 percent from 1982.

Several studies of state training schools have shown that more than half of the juveniles in such facilities do not need to be there. For example, a 1987 study conducted by the auditor general of Florida found that less than 40 percent of the youth in Florida's institutions qualified for training school placement under the agency's own criteria. [15] A recent report on the California Youth Authority system concluded that 50 percent of total wards of the authority could have been diverted if community-based alternatives had been available. [12] The residents of Delaware's only training school were rated on a 10-point risk scale, with "0" representing no risk. Of 135 juveniles in the facility, 21 percent scored "0" and 44 scored "1."

Many reformatories have at least some abused and neglected children or status offenders who can best be treated in the community at less cost. Most others are guilty of property crimes such as theft and vandalism. Fewer than one-fourth are guilty of offenses against people. (See Figure 1.) Mixing these populations in an institution can result in brutality among inmates and runs counter to efforts to rehabilitate them.

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States vary widely in the rate at which they institutionalize convicted youths. Alaska, Arizona, California, Kansas, Nevada, New Mexico, South Dakota, Washington, D.C., and Wyoming had 250 or more youths in training camps, reformatories, and halfway houses per 100,000 population over age 10 in 1987. Arkansas, Connecticut, Idaho, Massachusetts, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, Utah, Vermont, and West Virginia had fewer than 100 per 100,000 population over 10. (See Figure 2.)

In developing juvenile justice policies, state legislators need to be concerned about:

- *Protecting the public.* Protection of the general public from youthful offenders, especially violent offenders, is perhaps of utmost concern for state legislators. This is not only a basic function of government, but also an essential one for gaining the consensus and support necessary for community-based systems to succeed.
- *Reducing repeat crimes by juveniles.* Reducing recidivism by juvenile offenders is an important measure of juvenile corrections program success. Although there are many ways to measure recidivism, reduction in the frequency and severity of crimes by juveniles is an important bench mark for program effectiveness. Juvenile offenders often have been convicted of numerous crimes. In Utah, for instance, the typical offender is 16 years old with 18 prior convictions. Eighty-five percent of former wards of the California Youth Authority are rearrested within five years. [12]
- *Controlling costs.* The rising costs of the juvenile justice system have challenged state resources. Institutional placement is very expensive, usually $120 per day or more. Community residential placement may be less, and home placement with appropriate supervision may be only one-fifth or one-sixth of that of institutional placement. By avoiding capital costs on expensive institutions, states also may realize substantial savings.
- *Determining who makes placement decisions.* In most states, the juvenile court has broad discretionary powers with

TABLE 1.
JUVENILES IN TRAINING CAMPS, REFORMATORIES, AND HALFWAY HOUSES: NUMBER AND COST PER INSTITUTIONALIZED JUVENILE, 1984, 1986, AND 1987

State	Admissions Per Year 1984	Admissions Per Year 1986	Number in Custody on Feb. 2, 1987	Average Annual Cost Per Institutionalized Juvenile
Alabama	7,512	7,804	804	$20,000
Alaska	2,441	1,851	178	51,400
Arizona	10,636	12,344	1,019	18,600
Arkansas	1,919	2,793	249	27,200
California	133,462	156,940	14,712	21,100
Colorado	9,322	8,625	503	29,000
Connecticut	1,704	2,242	227	61,400
Delaware	1,021	1,109	169	26,000
Washington, D.C.	6,012	8,870	413	22,500
Florida	32,462	39,398	2,311	17,900
Georgia	14,466	16,031	1,338	25,500
Hawaii	2,863	3,437	149	28,800
Idaho	1,176	921	117	43,400
Illinois	16,111	18,432	1,930	26,800
Indiana	15,821	18,075	1,320	20,700
Iowa	2,725	4,095	427	28,400
Kansas	3,179	2,967	676	31,500
Kentucky	5,420	5,674	607	29,400
Louisiana	5,370	4,012	1,028	25,300
Maine	784	691	214	31,300
Maryland	8,653	8,329	1,032	30,700
Massachusetts	2,784	3,083	212	44,100
Michigan	13,318	16,828	1,816	39,100
Minnesota	8,640	8,608	581	39,200
Mississippi	4,642	5,588	355	18,900
Missouri	10,101	10,822	815	24,200
Montana	478	578	228	23,400
Nebraska	2,456	2,741	274	22,000
Nevada	5,697	6,468	482	31,800
New Hampshire	847	423	126	41,600
New Jersey	13,649	14,927	1,997	31,800
New Mexico	8,014	6,361	491	22,600
New York	7,377	9,679	2,226	54,300
North Carolina	4,392	5,882	812	28,600
North Dakota	557	445	69	28,900
Ohio	32,737	37,229	3,126	22,000
Oklahoma	2,480	5,179	446	43,700
Oregon	7,965	9,475	592	29,200
Pennsylvania	13,861	12,948	1,103	47,000
Rhode Island	632	740	105	78,700
South Carolina	4,546	4,081	715	27,200
South Dakota	1,598	1,976	228	16,500
Tennessee	13,824	15,187	1,038	25,600
Texas	30,509	35,080	2,421	26,000
Utah	5,414	6,177	217	35,400
Vermont	0	176	15	66,700
Virginia	13,405	13,932	1,456	29,100
Washington	22,107	23,690	1,134	35,300
West Virginia	1,374	1,273	141	22,600
Wisconsin	4,867	6,064	686	29,900
Wyoming	277	374	173	19,200
Total	**521,607**	**590,654**	**53,503**	**$27,000**

Source: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice, 1988.

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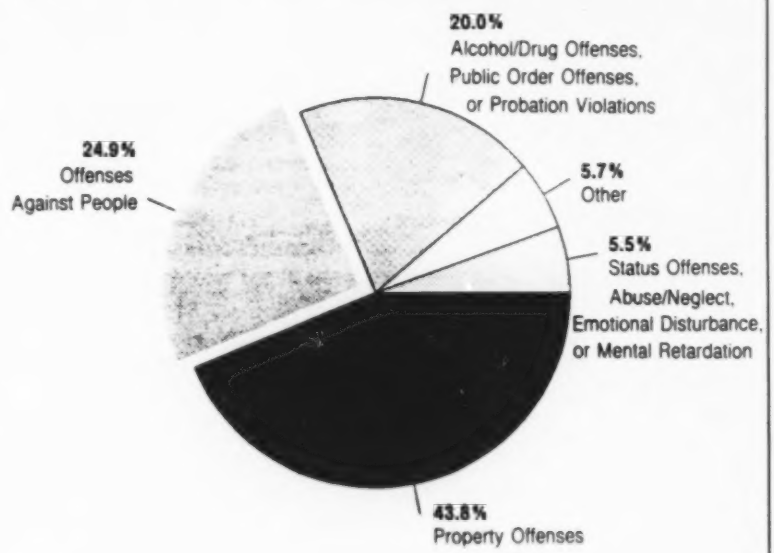
respect to the placement of adjudicated youths. In recent years, however, some states have moved to limit this discretion, particularly with respect to the decision to confine a youth in a secure facility. For example, courts may be required to consider the recommendations of an advisory group or personnel from youth corrections agencies. In eight states (Arkansas, Alaska, Illinois, Kansas, Montana, New Mexico, Texas, and Vermont), youth corrections agencies make placement decisions. The move to limit broad judicial discretion comes in response to concerns about the potential for inequitable, capricious, or disproportionate sentences; the need for due process protections; and a desire to control juvenile justice system costs better. [15, pp. 2-5]

- *Helping the juvenile offender and his family.* Juvenile offenders often come from disfunctional families and from backgrounds of abuse and neglect. Improving the relationship of the juvenile to his family and providing advice on parenting skills may reduce criminal behavior and benefit society as well as the offender and his family.

FIGURE 1.
TYPES OF OFFENSES AND OTHER REASONS FOR WHICH JUVENILE OFFENDERS WERE HELD IN PUBLIC JUVENILE FACILITIES, 1987



Source: Barbara Allen-Hagen, "Children in Custody," *Juvenile Justice Bulletin* (October 1988), p. 3.

OPTIONS FOR PLACEMENT OF CONVICTED JUVENILE OFFENDERS

Traditionally, juvenile justice systems provide few options for placement of convicted offenders. Large state training institutions function as the major alternative to probation for all offenders, regardless of the nature of the crime and the needs of the juvenile.

New reform alternatives are designed to emphasize individual treatment of problem juveniles. A range of settings and services allows placement where rehabilitation can be maximized and costs minimized. Violent youth can be sent to small, secure facilities that offer intensive counseling and services. Most of the other young offenders can be placed in family-like residential settings or their own homes, where appropriate supervision can be tailored to individual needs, avoiding costs for unnecessary services.

Placement decisions are usually based on evaluations made with an objective risk/needs assessment instrument. Violent offenders guilty of manslaughter, rape, aggravated assault, or escape from secure facilities are automatically sent to secure facilities. Other factors used in the evaluation include seriousness of the offense, previous arrests, drug and alcohol use, and whether the juvenile was on probation at the time of the crime.

Services for juvenile offenders that may be utilized in community settings include behavioral supervision, individual counseling, school placement, reward systems, recreational activities, parent and family counseling, drug and alcohol treatment and counseling, social skills training, youth groups, and sometimes camping or programs such as Outward Bound. Other, less frequently used services include tutoring, job placement, job counseling, and community service.

Placement alternatives include detention centers, transfer to adult courts, secure facilities, observation and assessment facilities,

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adventure programs, many types of residential community programs, and in-home placement with varying levels of supervision. (See Figure 3.)

Detention centers. Designed as short-term (e.g., 1-7 days) pretrial secure holding facilities for youths accused of serious offenses who pose a clear and substantial threat to themselves or others, detention centers too often are used to hold nondangerous youths for inordinately long periods of time. [10, p. 225] From 1977 to 1982, the average stay in detention centers rose from 12 to 17 days. Detention center placements are expensive. In Fort Lauderdale, Florida, for example, placement in a detention center costs $90 per day per youth, versus $45-$50 a day for a halfway house placement. Increasing use of detention centers has led to overcrowding and the filing of a number of lawsuits.

Transfer to adult courts. Since 1976, nearly half the states have approved legislation to make transfers of juvenile offenders to adult courts easier, usually in the belief that punishment will be more severe. This is not always the case because juveniles often receive probation or more lenient sentences in adult courts. Where it is the case, minor offenders are sometimes sent to adult prisons, using up costly prison resources. According to Judge Frank Orlando, director of the Florida Atlantic University Center for the Study of Youth Policy, this is a serious concern in Florida.

Placement in reformatory/training school. The most severe alternative in the juvenile system is secure facilities. As discussed earlier, states traditionally have operated large, secure training schools. States implementing reform rely on much smaller institutions, usually those with fewer than 30 beds, that avoid the mixing of serious and nonserious juvenile offenders in the same facility. This eliminates the "training ground for crime" that large institutions often become and allows staff to direct their attention to serious offenders. These facilities may be operated by private, nonprofit organizations as well as by government.

Observation and assessment facilities. They provide temporary, closely supervised residential placement while the youth's needs are evaluated and a treatment plan developed. Length of stay in Utah, for example, can be for up to 90 days.

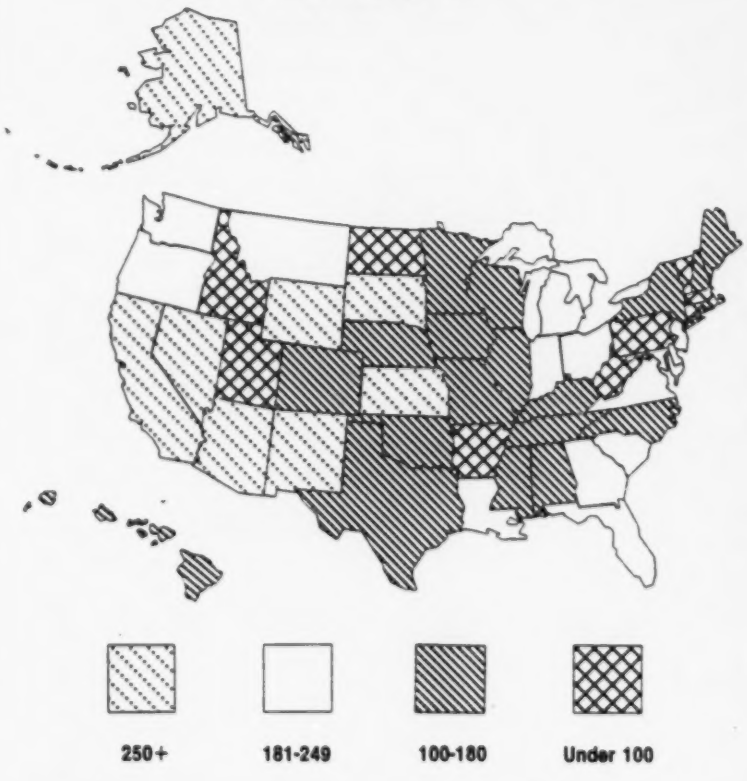
Adventure programs. Programs such as Outward Bound and Marine Institutes attempt to build self-esteem through accomplishments in demanding settings while teaching discipline and teamwork.

Residential community programs. They provide 24-hour supervision and treatment. This option takes many forms, including emergency shelters, foster care, proctor advocates, and group homes. Restitution is often an important component of noninstitutional placement programs.

Emergency shelters are used as a front-end diversion from the juvenile justice system for runaway and ungovernable youth. Their goal is to involve parents, who often have given up on the child, through reconciliation and crash courses in parenting.

Foster care and proctor advocates feature home-like settings and often house juveniles

FIGURE 2.
NUMBER OF JUVENILES IN CUSTODY PER 100,000 POPULATION OVER AGE 10, 1987



Source: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice, 1988.

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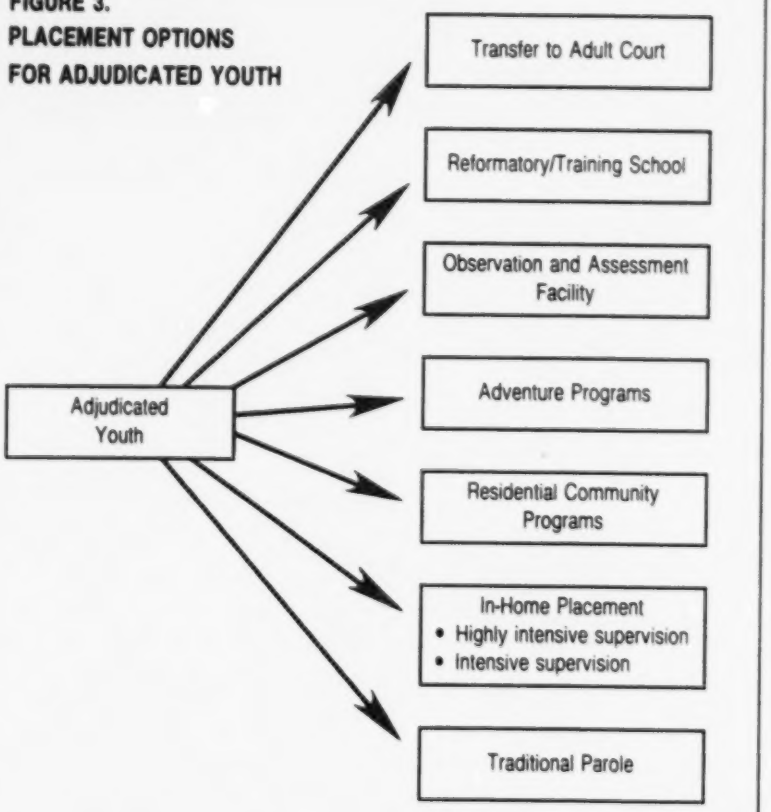
whose parents don't want them at home. Utah's Proctor Advocate program may place one or two problem juveniles in the proctor's home. The proctor acts as a parent. A counselor also works with these youth and provides support and advice to the proctor. A caseworker may see his charge three to seven times a week and will have a caseload of five to eight children. The youth, proctor, and caseworker determine a treatment plan that is treated as a contract with the youth.

Group homes take care of a much larger number of juveniles, perhaps as many as 25. Residents earn privileges by staying out of trouble, performing their assigned responsibilities, participating, and having a good attitude. But residents often object to locating group homes in their neighborhoods, causing some to be located in areas distant from the juveniles' homes. In addition to being sometimes poorly trained, staff are usually overworked and underpaid, causing high turnover and another source of instability in the juvenile's life.

In-home placement. The least expensive alternative, this placement often includes a "tracking" component as well as an individualized treatment program. Caseworkers are assigned to make frequent contacts with their charges to ensure that juveniles are attending school, meeting job responsibilities, and honoring curfews. In addition, restitution may be required by the juvenile.

Broward County, Florida, is experimenting with two tracking programs. Intensive supervision features a one-to-ten caseworker load and requires seven random face-to-face contacts between caseworker and juvenile offender each week. Juveniles must telephone their caseworker to get permission to go anywhere. Highly intensive supervision requires four face-to-face contacts daily at work, home, or school. The offender wears an electronic monitor on his wrist, which, when a caseworker phones, must be attached to the phone within 30 seconds.

FIGURE 3.
PLACEMENT OPTIONS FOR ADJUDICATED YOUTH



STATE REFORM EFFORTS

Massachusetts pioneered the deinstitutionalization of juvenile offenders. After three years of failed attempts to reform the state's five training schools housing 1,200 juveniles, the state decided to close the facilities in 1972.

Fifteen years later, Massachusetts places 10 percent of offenders in secure facilities, fewer than any other state except Vermont. Massachusetts has an institutionalization rate of only 42 per 100,000 population over age 10, compared with a national average of 208. (See Figure 1.) The state's largest secure facility has only 18 beds.

Edward J. Loughran, commissioner of the Department of Youth Services, says, "We are taking a certain amount of risk by putting some youths in the community-based programs." But, he adds, the key is knowing the risk and selecting the right program.

Judges commit juveniles to the Department of Youth Services rather than to a particular facility. Of the 1,700 juveniles under the department at any one time, 900 reside at home.

Youth service workers report that 50 percent of these youth do not return to criminal activity, a rate much better than the national statistics show. Perhaps more important, 10 years after deinstitutionalization, graduates of the juvenile justice system account for only 19 percent of

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adult inmates, compared with 40 percent in the late 1960s. [12, p. B2]

The community-based programs also serve as a resource for youths leaving secure facilities, by aiding the transition back to the community, as well as an alternative to incarceration for less serious offenders.

Utah changed its juvenile justice system through legislation in 1981 that followed six years of study. The impetus began with changes in federal law and a 1975 class action lawsuit. Consensus on direction evolved through a legislatively funded outside study, a task force review of the state corrections system, a 1980 master plan put together by a juvenile justice task force, and a decision by the governor and the legislature to make juvenile justice reform a priority. An $800,000 federal grant funded development of privately operated community residential programs.

According to Utah state Senator K. S. Cornaby, "We did not go in with the idea that we would save money. We recognized that it was going to cost as much or more to pay for community-based alternatives." The new legislation limited secure confinement to juveniles "who pose a danger of serious bodily harm to others, who cannot be controlled in a less secure setting, or who have engaged in a pattern of conduct characterized by persistent and serious criminal offenses."

The use of secure confinement was complemented by residential and nonresidential community programs. The state's 450-bed secure facility, the Youth Development Center, was replaced by two 30-bed secure facilities. Both department and court officials make placement recommendations using specific guidelines, but the court makes the final decision.

The Division of Youth Corrections and the Youth Parole Authority decide when juveniles should be released from secure facilities, and then the juvenile court retains jurisdiction until termination of community placement.

Senator Cornaby is enthusiastic about the results. "Has it succeeded? We believe so in bright lights and blaring music. We have experienced a significant drop in our recidivism rates." A division study concluded that the community programs have not resulted in increased risk to the community. Of those in community programs, 55 percent remain crime free, and the 45 percent who commit additional crimes exhibit a reduction in crimes directed at people.

Costs have also fallen. The Division of Youth Corrections estimates that community programs operate at half that of secure confinement, and keeping youth in their homes amounts to one-sixth the cost. [5, p. 5]

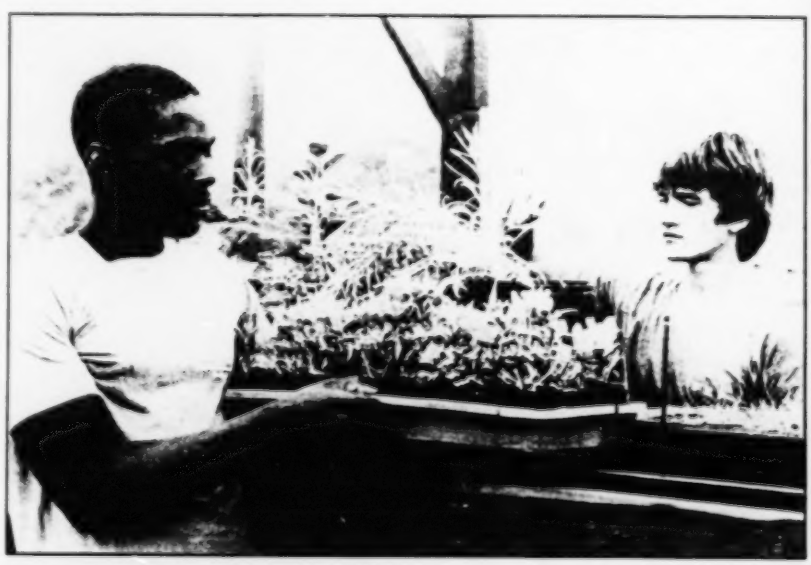
For the handful of juvenile offenders still placed in secure facilities, average length of stay has actually increased. According to Judge Orlando, who was mentioned earlier, Utah's smaller secure facilities "keep the serious and habitual offender in custody longer in order for the program to have the necessary time to change behavior where possible. Those juveniles are then released to the community gradually."

Florida changed its system to emphasize community-based services as a result of a consent decree in a federal court action and a state auditor's review of the state training schools. The report recommended removal of less serious offenders from the schools, development of community alternatives, and juvenile placements based on the nature of offenses and the child's needs. Two and one-half million dollars were reallocated to community services from the institution's budget, and an additional $2.5 million was allocated for community services.

The reform dramatically cut institutional use. The 1976 census of 1,540 juveniles shrank to 960 juveniles in 1981, and 295 juveniles in 1988. Savings are also being realized by reduced lengths of stay.

Although it is still too early to measure the impact, a 1984 study of 1,664 delinquents released from programs showed training schools had the highest cost per case of $7,260, while the least expensive of 10 options cost $2,790. Nine programs had rankings superior to training schools in measures including one-year recidivism rates. [15, p. 5]

Florida Representative Elaine Gordon says of the state's reforms, "Given the shifting of commitment populations from our most expensive to least costly programs, with no reduction in effectiveness and in many instances sharp improvements, significant cost-savings have resulted." A major source of those savings has been reduced capital expenditures.



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Maryland began reforming its juvenile justice system in 1987. While a lawsuit calling for closure of a state reformatory was pending, the state called in an outside consulting team to evaluate the system, specifying special attention to be given to the two reformatories.

The consultants declared that the system had become "a child welfare system" rather than "an agency which responds to juveniles who have broken the law." Montrose School had become the residence for "victimized, homeless, addicted, mentally ill, educationally handicapped, developmentally disabled children." The other school, Hickey, was found to have ceded much authority to juvenile inmates and sometimes to control inmates through psychotropic drugs and antidepressive medication. [8, p. 22]

State legislators and Maryland Governor William Schaefer visited Montrose shortly after the report and ordered the facility phased out.

Nine million dollars from the Montrose School budget were redirected to community programs, assessment teams, and other programs that attempt to rehabilitate youth. Linda D'Amario Rossi, director of the Maryland Juvenile Services Agency, says, "We haven't asked the legislature for one penny more. We just use the dollars differently."

Individual treatment plans were developed for 118 juveniles diverted from the Montrose facility in its last six months. After 10 months, 38 had been rearrested, a figure substantially lower than that for training schools.

Maryland state Senator Francis Kelly, a leader in the reform movement, says he is "very enthusiastic about the direction we're going. I believe that the solution to jail and prison overcrowding in the future is to help our young people today."

EVALUATION OF JUVENILE JUSTICE REFORMS

The move to greater use of community-based alternatives for juvenile offenders is relatively recent, and the limited number of evaluations has shown mixed results. Evaluations usually look at costs and the rate of recidivism. But the time periods of the evaluation are generally short, just a few years. Longer term impacts, such as the criminality of adults who were in the juvenile justice system, are largely unavailable.

Massachusetts has the oldest and most evaluated state program. Evaluations have been completed by the Harvard University Center for Criminal Justice and the National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD). The Harvard evaluation, headed by Lloyd Ohlin, compared a group from reformatories and a group from community-based programs. *Recidivism* was defined as a court reappearance or conviction. The study did not make distinctions between the number or seriousness of the new offenses.

The Harvard study found that recidivism was about the same for both groups but varied greatly between different regions of the state. A 1985 book by Ohlin and Miller, *Delinquency and Community*, found that recidivism statewide was higher after the reform than before but was lower in the regions that pursued the reforms most *aggressively*. They defined aggressively as offering many diverse options to meet the special needs of each juvenile better. For example, the Worcester area showed that 43 percent of the community-based group reappeared in court, compared with 67 percent of the community's reformatory group. Ohlin and Miller also noted that the region that deviated least from the traditional approach had "an exceptionally large increase in recidivism."

Preliminary results from the NCCD Massachusetts study concluded there was "a large drop in the incidence of recidivism" by juveniles in the new programs, including a large drop in the severity of offenses. The decrease in severity was most notable for more violent offenders. The decrease in recidivism was sustained throughout the four-year follow-up period, NCCD said. [8, pp. 27-29]

Utah has the most encouraging evaluation results. A 1986 study by the Utah Division of Youth Corrections found that 73 percent of youth completing the community programs remained conviction free 12 months after their release. Juveniles paroled from secure facilities had a high conviction rate, but their crimes tended to be less serious than those for which they were originally convicted. Seventy-six percent were convicted of further crimes, but this group had averaged 24 convictions prior to their commitment to a secure facility. [5, p. 6]

NCCD conducted a three-year evaluation of Utah's reforms using a sophisticated research design that measured both frequency and severity of offenses before and after entering the state juvenile justice system. The researchers compared juveniles from community corrections programs who had histories of serious and repetitive crimes with juveniles on probation who had committed only minor offenses.

NCCD found that although a large proportion of the juveniles in community-based services continued to be arrested, there were large declines in their rate of offenses. A "suppression effect" was calculated for both groups, which attempted to quantify reductions in the frequency of delinquent behavior. The higher the suppression ratio, the lower the recidivism. Youths in community-based services scored 66 percent for number of arrests and 72 percent for seriousness of offenses. The probations group registered less impressive reductions of 33 and 44 percent each.

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Only 6 percent of the most dangerous offenders in community-based programs who had been retained in secure facilities were later charged with violent crimes, NCCD concluded. "The imposition of appropriate community-based controls on highly active, serious, and chronic juvenile offenders does not compromise public protection." The study also suggested that shorter lengths of stay in secure facilities are as effective as longer stays [8, pp. 30-32].

William Barton and Jeffrey Butts of the Center for the Study of Youth Policy at the University of Michigan looked at the efforts of a large metropolitan county—***Wayne County, Michigan*** (which includes Detroit)—to divert more juvenile offenders from institutional placements. The county used objective criteria to assign youth who normally would have been placed into a training school into three intensive community programs with small caseloads and frequent caseworker contacts. The most violent offenders were excluded. Costs and recidivism rates were compared with those of a control group of juveniles committed to a training school or comparable private institution.

Almost half of the juveniles in community programs successfully completed the programs, and 78 percent of these graduates had no subsequent charges against them over the two-year study. But 60 percent of the community program group appeared in court during the study, compared with 50 percent of the control group committed to a training school. However, 30 percent of the community program group's appearances in court were for status offenses or rules violations, and their offenses were somewhat less serious overall. When adjusted for time in the community (the control group was in a secure facility some of the time), the rate of charges showed only a small difference.

Barton and Butts concluded: "Despite their best efforts, small caseloads and retention of the youth in the community, the outcome is no different than that of commitment and out-of-home placement." The study did, however, note a reduction in seriousness of charges against the community group when compared with that of the group sent to secure facilities.

The Barton and Butts study also looked at program costs. They found a significant cost-savings for the community-based programs. In-home placements cost $25.90 per day for males, or $63 less than the average daily cost of commitment. Between 1983 and 1986, more than $11.5 million in commitment costs were avoided [1, pp. 14-16, 19, 36-40].

But the researchers found some of these cost-savings were reduced by "net-widening." When the explicit criteria used to place juveniles into community placements during the research period ended, judges began to place more of these juveniles into facilities again. In addition, some youths were placed into community programs who previously would not have received services. Alternative programs actually drew in more youths, increasing the scope of the juvenile justice system.

Other factors also limited cost-savings. First, more cases remained in community programs than the originally estimated year. Second, many parents refused in-home placement for their delinquent children who were deemed eligible. Third, courts placed more juveniles into facilities than were warranted by the original criteria. Judges ruled these juveniles ineligible for community placement because of chronic home truancy, potential for future delinquency, chaotic family environment, and so on.

The Barton and Butts study found that 29 percent of cost-savings from diversion in 1986 were eliminated by the new costs of net-widening [2, pp. 11-12].

CONCLUSION

Community-based programs in the juvenile justice system present a promising alternative to the disappointing results achieved by large institutional facilities. A diverse group of states has found that intensive, individualized services provided in small, family-like residential settings or in the juvenile's own home yield comparable or reduced recidivism rates. The success of these programs appears to depend on how well they are managed, their diversity, and their intensity, all of which may be affected by state funding decisions.

Community-based programs may also reduce costs. Smaller secure facilities using shorter lengths of stay and use of nonsecure residential programs cost less or no more than traditional large facilities. In-home placement with intensive supervision and community-based services costs even less. These alternatives are especially appropriate for the large numbers of nonviolent juveniles and those guilty of lesser offenses who often have been placed in traditional institutions.

The tendency to widen the net of intervention may erode some of the cost-savings. States can use objective criteria to determine juvenile placements to ensure consistency and maximize efficiency. Although most states leave placement decisions to the courts, some states vest the youth corrections agency with this authority. Special advisory groups or community and school representatives sometimes participate by making recommendations to the courts.

As state legislators face a new wave of youth in their high-risk years for juvenile crime and steadily increasing juvenile justice system costs, increased reliance on community-based programs may be an important new tool to maximize rehabilitation, minimize costs, and maintain public safety.

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